

HOUSE BILL 1372

By Johnson C

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49,
Chapter 7, to enact the Tennessee Veterans
Education Transition Support Act.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 7, is amended by adding Sections 2 through 10 of this act as a new, appropriately designated part.

SECTION 2. This part shall be known and may be cited as the "Tennessee Veterans Education Transition Support Act" or the "Tennessee VETS Act".

SECTION 3. The general assembly finds that veterans need comprehensive, statewide support to aid them in transitioning from military service to enrollment at public institutions of higher education. This support should encourage enrollment of veterans and address issues that may deter veterans' participation in public higher education, such as affordability, lack of awareness by faculty and staff of military and veterans' culture, the need for orientation and mentoring programs designed specifically for veterans and facilitation of credential completion by veterans as quickly as possible.

SECTION 4. As used in this part:

- (1) "THEC" means the Tennessee higher education commission;
- (2) "Veteran" means a former member of the armed forces of the United States, or a former or current member of a reserve or Tennessee national guard unit who was called into active military service of the United States, as defined in § 58-1-102; and
- (3) "Veterans education transition support campus" or "VETS campus" means a campus of a public institution of higher education that has demonstrated educational

support for veterans and has been designated by THEC under this part as a campus supportive of veterans.

SECTION 5. A veteran enrolled in any public institution of higher education in this state shall not be required to pay out-of-state tuition or any out-of-state fee, if the veteran:

- (1) Has not been dishonorably discharged from a branch of the United States armed forces or the national guard;
- (2) Is eligible for Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits or Montgomery GI Bill benefits; and
- (3) Enrolls in a public institution of higher education, after satisfying all admission requirements, within twenty-four (24) months after the date of discharge as reflected on the veteran's certificate of release or discharge from active duty, Form DD-214, or an equivalent document.

SECTION 6. To continue to qualify for in-state tuition and fees, a veteran shall:

- (1) Maintain continuous enrollment as defined by the public institution of higher education at which the veteran is enrolled; and
- (2) Within one (1) year of enrolling in the public institution of higher education:
 - (A) Register to vote in this state; or
 - (B) Demonstrate by objective evidence intent to be a resident of this state by obtaining at least two (2) of the following:
 - (i) A Tennessee driver license;
 - (ii) A Tennessee motor vehicle registration;
 - (iii) Proof of established employment in the state; or
 - (iv) Other documentation clearly evidencing domicile or residence in the state, as determined by THEC.

SECTION 7. THEC may designate public institutions of higher education as veterans education transition support campuses or VETS campuses. An institution seeking designation as a VETS campus shall apply by submitting a written request to the executive director of THEC. The request shall outline all services offered to veterans by the institution. THEC may conduct site visits to verify the services for veterans available at any prospective VETS campus.

SECTION 8. To become and continue to be a VETS campus, a campus of a public institution of higher education shall:

- (1) Conduct an annual campus survey of students who are veterans to identify the views, needs, issues and suggestions of veterans;
- (2) Provide information to faculty and staff about military and veterans' culture, including combat-related mental or physical disabilities or other challenges;
- (3) Administer orientation programs for students who are veterans;
- (4) Facilitate mentoring and support programs for students who are veterans;
- (5) Develop outreach and communication strategies for military bases located near the campus, for the purpose of assessing veterans' educational goals and meeting their identified needs;
- (6) Create and maintain a process for the assessment of prior learning that grants academic credit to veterans for transferable training and experience attained through service in the armed forces of the United States; and
- (7) Provide, on the campus web site, information on the availability of prior learning assessments and potential program credit for skills, training or education obtained during military service.

SECTION 9. THEC shall maintain a list of designated VETS campuses on its web site. For each designated VETS campus, THEC's web site shall include:

- (1) A link to the campus' web site;
- (2) Designated points of contact for academic and financial advising; and
- (3) Veteran enrollment statistics.

SECTION 10. Any campus meeting the qualification criteria and attaining the VETS campus designation shall provide annual data to THEC on the number of veterans enrolled at its campus, their programs of study and their completion of degrees or other credentials.

SECTION 11. Sections 5 and 6 of this act shall take effect July 1, 2014, the public welfare requiring it, and shall apply to veterans enrolled in public institutions of higher education beginning with the fall semester of the 2014-2015. All remaining sections of this act shall take effect upon becoming law, the public welfare requiring it.